



Government Office Building
9830 Patuxent Woods Dr.
Columbia, MD 21046

MINUTES

Thursday, 05 March 2020

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present: Ms. Jennifer Anthony, Mr. Reginald Avery, Mr. Michael Blum, Mr. Steven M. Bolen, Mr. Michael Griggs, Ms. Kelly Kesler, Mr. Robert Lowell, Mr. Keith McGuire, Mr. Bob Moore, and Mr. Paul Rivers.

Members Excused: Mr. J. Greg Jolissaint, Mr. Jonathan K. Branch, and Ms. Nafrettifi Griffin.

Members Absent: None.

Howard County Government Officials in Attendance: Ms. Lisa Terry (Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families).

Invited Guests: None.

Others in Attendance: Mr. Robert A. Berlett, Sr. (A.L. Post 300), Mr. Bob Pelletier (VFW Post 7472/A.L. Post 156), Mr. Yale Stenzler, Mr. Tom Glenn (A.L. Post 156), and Mr. Ed A. Hall (Chair, Joint Military Council) [via telephone].

MEETING SUMMARY:

1900 hrs Mr. Michael Blum, Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families (HCCVMF), presiding, opened the meeting.

- I. The Role was called: Ten Commission members being in attendance, Mr. Blum declared the Commission was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.
- II. Mr. Blum acknowledged the attendance of key Commission personnel: Ms. Lisa Terry, Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families and Mr. Ed A. Hall, Chair, Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC) (via telephone).



1. Consideration of the February 2020 Meeting Minutes

- a. Mr. Blum entered the 06 FEB 2020 Commission minutes onto the table and opened the table for discussion. Mr. Lowell asked that the minutes be amended to reflect his participation on the “Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County.” Mr. Blum asked for a motion to approve the minutes as amended. A motion and second to the motion were made. Mr. Blum called for a vote and the minutes were approved by voice vote. Subsequently, Mr. Blum directed that the 06 FEB 2020 Commission minutes be entered into the official record and it was so done.

2. Presentation by Invited Guests

None.

3. Old Business

- a. Update on the Veterans Day Lessons Learned: Ms. Terry stated that the Columbia Association (CA) met to discuss the role that each participant would take for the next Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony. She also stated that the parade route will be longer next time.

Mr. Blum asked who would pay for the digital signage this year? Ms. Terry stated that, right now, the County was expecting the community to pay for the signs. Mr. Blum and Ms. Terry stated that someone could reach out to the County Executive’s Office to ask if the County could reconsider its position and pay for the signs again this year.

- b. Feedback on VAMHCS: Mr. Bolen summarized the meeting of the Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System held on 19 February 2020. (See attachment A.)
- c. Update on the HoCo Veterans Resource Fair: Ms. Terry stated that the theme for this year’s Veterans Resource Fair is “Community Engagement and Connection.” The Fair, presented by Howard County Executive, Dr. Calvin Ball, III, the Office of Veterans and Military Families, and the Commission for Veterans and Military Families, will host over 50 government agencies, nonprofits, and veteran service organizations. The Fair will take place at Howard Community College in the Galleria on 21 April from 1600 to 1900 hours.

This year’s keynote speaker will be Major General (ret.) Linda Singh - the first African American woman to lead the Maryland National Guard.



Ms. Terry stated that registration for the event is highly recommended. More information and registration here: hccveteransfair.eventbrite.com

Ms. Kesler suggested that the Fair be advertised on social media so that Commissioners and guests can help advertise and spread the word about it.

Ms. Terry said that she would send out a sign-up sheet to volunteer for the Fair.

- d. 2019 HCCVMF Annual Report Submission: Ms. Terry stated that the 2019 Annual Report had been submitted and thanked the Commissioners, VSOs, and others for their input. She passed around a hardcopy of the Report. Ms. Terry also asked the Commissioners and VSOs supporting HCCVMF activities to log their volunteer hours for 2020 so that they can be compiled and summarized in this year's report.
- e. Update on Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County: Ms. Terry stated she has a contact that she will pass on to Mr. Blum to help the Committee with its investigation.
- f. Update on the Howard County Veterans Foundation Monument Design: Ms. Terry stated that, on 20 February, over 40 veterans and guests showed up at the Ellicott City American Legion Post 156 to participate in the design feedback of the veteran's monument. The monument will be placed at the Neighborhood Square currently under construction in downtown Columbia. Mr. Bob Gillette¹ of the Howard County Veterans Foundation presented the design details and symbology. The Foundation received a lot of positive feedback.
- g. Update on Veterans Support Group: Ms. Terry, Ms. Kesler, and Mr. Rivers stated that the Group was teaming with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to facilitate instructor training and that they have identified four veterans to start the training. The Group is also seeking professional clinicians to volunteer to support the meetings and they are looking for space to meet. Ms. Anthony asked if anyone could help them find space. Ms. Terry said that they could.

4. New Business

- a. Discussion of MHFA and Presentation by Mr. John Way at Fort Mead Alliance (FMA): Ms. Terry stated that Mr. Way submitted a proposal to the FMA Foundation Board to offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) classes to active duty service, veterans, and their family members. He briefed the Foundation on his proposal on 19 February.



- b. Update on Veterans Day in Schools Program: Mr. Moore stated that he had reached out to an HCPSS retired teacher (also a veteran) to discuss ideas about the Program. Ms. Terry said that he should also contact the PTA Council of Howard County (PTAC-HC). Mr. Avery stated that PTAC-HC's last meeting was in May.
- c. Legislative Affairs: Mr. Bolen stated that the MD House Ways and Means Committee held testimony on 03 March on House Bill 1109 (Disabled Active Duty Service Members, Disabled Veterans, and Surviving Spouses - Exemption From Property Tax and Other Charges and Refunds).

"The Bill would exempt certain dwelling houses owned by a disabled active duty service member, disabled veteran, or surviving spouse from certain governmental or taxing authority charges; requiring the State, a county, or a municipal corporation to pay a certain refund to a disabled active duty service member, disabled veteran, or surviving spouse under certain circumstances; requiring the State, a county, or a municipal corporation to pay interest on the refund under certain circumstances; etc."

- d. Update on Joint Activities Calendar: Mr. Hall stated that work on the calendar continues. They have new software and will use Ms. Terry's calendar as the master calendar. Mr. Blum asked who would deconflict calendar entries. Mr. Hall said that each of the VSOs would do their own deconfliction and then place their activity on the calendar.
- e. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC) Significant Items: Mr. Hall briefed the Commission on the following:
 - 1) The American Legion is sponsoring young men and women who are rising seniors in high school to attend Boys State/Girls State. Mr. Hall stated that the Legion has seven boys and two girls in Howard County going through the interview process this week.
 - 2) The American Legion will be giving scholastic and military excellence scholarships to outstanding ROTC/JROTC/MCJROTC cadets. A \$2,000 award will be given to JROTC cadets in three participating Howard County schools and one Baltimore County school. The Legion is taking nominations for the \$2,000 award. Please contact the JMC if you have anyone you'd like to nominate.

5. Upcoming Events of Importance

- a. On 18 April, American Legion Post 156 will conduct a flag retirement ceremony at 1200 hours. If any Commissioner would like to instruct or take the flag etiquette class that day, please contact Mr. Hall.



- b. The 74th Annual Howard County Fair will take place on 8 - 15 August in West Friendship, MD. The first day of the Fair will be Armed Forces Day.

6. Additional Items for Discussion

- a. Ms. Terry stated that her office will host the MDVA Joint County Veterans Commission Launch Meeting on 16 April.
- b. Ms. Terry stated that on 06 May, Fort Meade will hold a Military Spouse Job Fair and Appreciation Day.
- c. Ms. Terry stated that the Bourbon Club is considering supporting the Howard County Veterans Foundation at the White Oak Tavern in Ellicott City with a “tasting” event (15 or 29 April/TBD). Ten percent of the White Oak Tavern’s receipts would be donated to the Foundation.
- d. Ms. Terry asked for input from Commissioners and VSOs on ideas to help create a “buddy” program at Howard County elementary and middle schools. The program would provide support for children of military families and recognize their achievements.
- e. Mr. Bolen stated that on 04 March, he attended the Maryland Women’s Legislative Caucus 2nd Annual Women Veterans Day. The Caucus celebrated the 688th Central Postal Battalion (Six Triple Eight). The 688th was an all-Black female battalion that served honorably in World War II.

7. Next Commission Meeting Date(s)

- a) Mr. Blum announced that the next meeting of the Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families will be held on Thursday, 02 April 2020 starting at 1900 hours in the Government Office Building, 9830 Patuxent Woods Dr., Columbia, MD 21046.

ADJOURNMENT:

- 2040 hrs Mr. Blum called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion and second to the motion were made. Subsequent to the motions for adjournment, Mr. Blum closed the meeting and directed the Commission to stand in adjournment until 05 April 2020.



Minutes were drafted by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen

M. Blum
Presiding Officer

Notes:

- 1) Mr. Gillette is a former HCCVMF Commissioner.

Attachments:

- A) Meeting Notes: VAMHCS VSO & CS Stakeholders Meeting; 19 February 2020.



ATTACHMENT A

Meeting Notes:

VAMHCS VSO & CS Stakeholders Meeting
19 February 2020



Veterans Service Organization (VSO) & Congressional Stakeholders (CS) Meeting

VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS)
Baltimore VA Medical Center
Multipurpose Room, 3A-300
10 North Greene Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

19 February 2020

1100 hrs Dr. Adam M. Robison, Director VAMHCS, presiding, brought the meeting to order.

VAMHCS Updates

- 1) Dr. Robinson stated that the VA is closely monitoring the worldwide Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak and is in communication with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other federal agencies.

He also reminded us that it is still flu season and that veterans should continue to take precautions against the flu: get the flu vaccine, wash your hands, and cover your sneeze and cough.

- 2) Dr. Robinson reminded us that glaucoma is a silent disease and that veterans should get periodic eye exams to help with early detection. Glaucoma affects the optic nerve and is often caused by abnormally high blood pressure.

VAMHCS Clinical Updates

- 3) The VA has a new program called "Community Bridge." The goal of the program is to help veterans integrate into the community by offering mental health services.
- 4) VAMHCS has made changes to its Emergency Room in-processing procedures to improve treatment flow so that veterans can get the help they need quicker and more efficiently.

VBA Updates

- 5) On 01 January, the VA began processing claims under the "Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act." So far, about \$92M has been given out in claims. There are still about 420,000 claims still pending nationwide.



National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Update

- 6) 29 March is “National Vietnam War Veterans Day.” Commemoration ceremonies will be held at Baltimore National Cemetery at 1100 hours and at Annapolis National Cemetery at 1400 hours. (NOTE: On 14 March (via social media), the Baltimore National Cemetery is reporting that the ceremonies scheduled at the Baltimore and Annapolis National Cemeteries have been postponed indefinitely due to the growing concerns over the COVID-19 outbreak.)
- 7) On 02 May, veterans and the public are invited to join the “Carry The Load Relay” team as they stop through Annapolis. The Team travels across America to provide an active way for Americans to connect to the sacrifices our military, veterans, first responders and their families make. The relay started at West Point Cemetery and will end at the Dallas Memorial March on Memorial Day weekend. The public can join the 3.5-mile segment of the walk starting at 1700 hours at Annapolis National Cemetery which will conclude at Home Depot (145 Defense Hwy).
- 8) On Friday, 22 May, the Boy Scouts will conduct a “Flag-In” operation at Baltimore National Cemetery starting at 1830 hours. The Daisy Scouts will conduct a “Flag-In” TBD date/time at Annapolis National Cemetery.

MyVA

- 9) The Chesapeake Veterans Alliance is planning to hold a benefit claims clinic and resource fair at Carroll County Community College on 19 March from 1000 to 1300 hours. They are expecting more than 400 veterans to attend. (NOTE: On 14 March (via social media), it is being reported that the Veterans Claims Clinic and Resource Fair scheduled for 19 March at the Carroll Community College has been cancelled.)

Warrior to Soulmate (W2SM) Program

- 10) The W2SM program’s mission is to enhance wellness by strengthening a veteran’s relationship with their significant others through intensive, evidence-based group skills training, and educational experiences to promote healthy, happy, resilient interpersonal relationships. The VAMHCS will be holding several workshops throughout the year.

Care in the Community/Mission Act

- 11) The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is continuing to shift from the Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) program to the Community Care Network (CCN) across the country.



12) Community Care Nurses can now order CPAC devices for sleep apnea patients. Veterans no longer have to wait for a provider to order the devices.

Homeless & Veteran Court Update

13) Initial data indicates that the number of Baltimore homeless and unsheltered veterans is low this year. Official statistics to be released TBD.

Next meeting: 19 February, 1100 hrs, VAMHCS, Baltimore VA Medical Center, Rm. 3A-300.

1215 hrs Dr. Adam M. Robison adjourned the meeting.

Notes taken (via dial-in) by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen